

Real Patriotism

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Traditionally, patriotism has too often been defined, in Brad Spangler's words, as "loyalty to the existing rulers." That is, a willingness of subjects everywhere "to do each other in through un-neighborly use of cutting implements at the whims of their political leaders."

It was this sense of the word patriotism, I think, that Big Bill Haywood had in mind when he said:

You ask me why the I.W.W. is not patriotic to the United States. If you were a bum without a blanket; if you had left your wife and kids when you went west for a job, and had never located them since; if your job had never kept you long enough in a place to qualify you to vote; if you slept in a lousy, sour bunkhouse, and ate food just as rotten as they could give you and get by with it; if deputy sheriffs shot your cooking cans full of holes and spilled your grub on the ground; if your wages were lowered on you when the bosses thought they had you down; if there was one law for Ford, Suhr, and Mooney, and another for Harry Thaw; if every person who represented law and order and the nation beat you up, railroaded you to jail, and the good Christian people cheered and told them to go to it, how in hell do you expect a man to be patriotic? This war is a business man's war and we don't see why we should go out and get shot in order to save the lovely state of affairs that we now enjoy.

But there's another sense of the word, in which patriotism is a good thing. Patriotism, in this sense, is a love for one's native soil (in the literal sense), an attachment to hearth and home, and piety toward the graves of one's ancestors. It is a desire to defend these things, and the ordinary way of daily life that goes with them, against the violence of any outside enemy—including the central government. Or as Edward Abbey said, "A patriot must always be ready to defend his country against his government."

The patriots who founded this country were surely patriots in the second sense of the word more than the first. They were not fighting, as Voltairine de Cleyre characterized the dumbed-down American history in the publik skools, a mere foreign war against the British. They were fighting a genuine revolution against their own governments.

To the average American of today, the Revolution means the series of battles fought by the patriot army with the armies of England. The millions of school children who attend our public schools are taught to draw maps of the siege of Boston and the siege of Yorktown, to know the general plan of the several campaigns, to quote the number of prisoners of war surrendered with Burgoyne; they are required to remember the date when Washington crossed the Delaware on the ice; they are told to “Remember Paoli,” to repeat “Molly Stark’s a widow,” to call General Wayne “Mad Anthony Wayne,” and to execrate Benedict Arnold; they know that the Declaration of Independence was signed on the Fourth of July, 1776, and the Treaty of Paris in 1783; and then they think they have learned the Revolution...blessed be George Washington! They have no idea why it should have been called a “revolution” instead of the “English war,” or any similar title: it’s the name of it, that’s all. And name-worship, both in child and man, has acquired such mastery of them, that the name “American Revolution” is held sacred, though it means to them nothing more than successful force, while the name “Revolution” applied to a further possibility, is a spectre detested and abhorred. In neither case have they any idea of the content of the word, save that of armed force...

Such is the spirit of government-provided schools. Ask any child what he knows about Shays’s rebellion, and he will answer, “Oh, some of the farmers couldn’t pay their taxes, and Shays led a rebellion against the court-house at Worcester, so they could burn up the deeds; and when Washington heard of it he sent over an army quick and taught them a good lesson” — “And what was the result of it?” “The result? Why — why — the result was — Oh yes, I remember — the result was they saw the need of a strong federal government to collect the taxes and pay the debts.”

Ask if he knows what was said on the other side of the story, ask if he knows that the men who had given their goods and their health and their strength for the freeing of the country now found themselves cast into prison for debt, sick, disabled, and poor, facing a new tyranny for the old; that their demand was that the land should become the free communal possession of those who wished to work it, not subject to tribute, and the child will answer “No.” Ask him if he ever read Jefferson’s letter... about it, in which he says:

...“God forbid that we should ever be twenty years without such a rebellion! ... What country can preserve its liberties if its rulers are not warned from time to time that the people preserve the spirit of resistance? Let them take up arms... The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants. It is its natural manure.” Ask any school child if he was ever taught that the author of the Declaration of Independence, one of the great founders of the common school, said these things, and he will look at you with open mouth and unbelieving eyes.

The real American Revolution started, certainly not in 1776, and not even on April 19, 1775, but back in 1774 (See Ray Raphael, *A People’s History of the American Revolution*). One of North’s “intolerable acts,” in response to “provocations” by the Massachusetts-Bay colony, was to order the royal governor to suspend that colony’s General Court. The lower house, in response, met as a revolutionary Convention, without royal assent—in conscious imitation of the Convention

Parliament of 1688, which met as a revolutionary body (despite election writs never having been issued under the royal seal, which James II threw into the Thames on the way out of Dodge). In ensuing weeks and months, the legislative bodies of other colonies likewise met in defiance of their own governors and colonial charters. Meanwhile, in Massachusetts and other colonies (especially in New England), committees of public safety met to do the work of defunct regular local government, and to supervise the local militia companies. Local patriots shut down courthouses and prevented foreclosures for unpaid taxes, and forced would-be placeholders to renounce their royal commissions on pain of tarring and feathering. By the spring of 1775, the Convention and the ad hoc executive bodies created by it had taken direction of the arming and training of the colonial militia, and exercised direct control over its magazines and other facilities. Massachusetts was in the process of raising her own regular army of 13,000, and creating a joint military command with the other New England colonies. It was these armed forces—acting two months before the Continental Congress got around to forming a Continental Army under the sainted General Washington—that responded in April to a British invasion aimed at seizing a stock of arms stored at Concord.

Shithead “patriots” like Sean Hannity, who fulminate against “criticizing the Commander-in-Chief in wartime,” had they been alive in those days, would have screamed for the blood of Sam Adams. And contrariwise, as Spangler points out,

I believe that if he were alive today, Samuel Adams would be not merely calling for impeachment, but agitating for a revolutionary tribunal to bring forth manila hemp articles of impeachment, tied with several coils in the loop.

Unfortunately, patriotism in this country is identified mainly with the Fox News/talk radio subculture of Fatherland-worship. Here’s Mike Rogers’ (an American expatriate living in Japan) description of America’s Good Germans:

Let’s face it, what’s more important: the truth or the nation? The nation, right? It doesn’t matter if the leader took the nation into a war on false pretenses – it’s safer and more fashionable to toe the party line. Those women and children were being discriminated against and savaged by those Poles in the Danzig Corridor [not to mention those Kuwaiti incubator babies and the Iraqi troops massed on the Saudi border]. Saddam was an evil man. We had to go after them. The world is better off today. The revisionists can say all they want, but the leader had to act before the proof came in some terrible form like a mushroom cloud. Take it to them I say. Kill them all then let God sort them out.

We’ve got these Neanderthals in Japan too, but not very many. They are a rarity. Most people would be too embarrassed to walk around with flag pins on their lapels and idiotic bumper stickers on the cars that show everyone just how ill-educated and how low their I.Q.’s are. I mean, really, when you stop and think about it, if you went to any country in the world and saw some guy wearing his country’s flag pin on their lapel and bumper stickers all over his car saying how his country is “God’s Country,” you’d think he was a buffoon and had more than just a few screws loose, right? So what makes you think that Americans who do this aren’t anymore nuts than, say, a Nazi cheerleader or someone who cheers on Imperial Japan?

“Oh, but that’s different.” You say? “Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan did lots of bad things like genocide, mass murder, and waging war of aggression.” If you seriously thought this, even for a moment, then consider that you just may have some Neanderthal blood in you. Intelligent people recognize and admit that America has waged many wars of aggression and has committed genocide more than once. The only people who don’t agree with me here are the ill-educated Neanderthals.... You’ve seen them, they are everywhere in America: they are usually sporting a flag pin on their lapel.

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